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ABSTRACT

A program review model that can be used at the system level in the Simcoe County in Ontario (Canada) schools is presented. Program review is a process of systematically marshalling information so as to enable individuals to critically debate a specific program and eventually make more informed decisions about the program. A variety of conceptual approaches is required to reflect system priorities and indicate the size and scope of each program. Both qualitative and quantitative measures should be used whenever possible. Program review is necessary for accountability and program development. The model for Simcoe County contains the following steps: (1) determine the need for a review; (2) initiate preplanning; (3) develop a focus; (4) prepare for data collection; (5) collect the data; (6) analyze the data; (7) prepare suggested courses of action; (8) present the findings; (9) develop the action plan; and (10) undertake follow-up activities. Fifty-nine procedures within the 10 steps are presented. Strategies that facilitate program review are highlighted. Although designed for system-level evaluation, program review procedures and strategies can be used at the classroom and school levels. Twelve figures illustrating the model and 38 references are included. (SLD)

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PROGRAM REVIEW MODEL

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Program review is a process of systematically marshalling information so as to enable individuals to critically debate a specific program and eventually make more informed decisions about the program

INTRODUCTION

Since the introduction of **Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior Divisions (OS:IS)**, there has been an increased focus on curriculum renewal, implementation and program review. At the provincial level, the Ministry of Education has developed a number of new curriculum guidelines. Within the last few years there have been significant efforts to develop a provincial strategy for conducting program reviews. These initiatives have been consistent with the CRDI model already established. They have also, however, relied heavily on the International Education Achievement approach that focuses on the **intended** curriculum, the **implemented** curriculum and the **attained** curriculum. Furthermore, provincial reviews have used OAIP items wherever possible and have included multiple matrix sampling techniques.

In this Board the **Document Implementation Plan** was developed as a framework for implementing documents such as curriculum guidelines. Although this plan had a review component, specific procedures for undertaking a program review were not described. At the end of the 1987-1988 school year, individuals who played a key role in program reviews conducted during the mid 1980s were involved in a focused discussion about a program review model that might be used in the Simcoe County Board of Education. Since then, their suggestions have been modified and enhanced by subsequent program review initiatives.

These provincial and local initiatives in program review activities plus the comments and suggestions of a large number of program services personnel, principals and teachers have been considered in the program review model that is being described here. The intent is to document many of the procedures and issues that have emerged during the past several years and that have also become an integral part of this board's approach to program reviews.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAM REVIEW

Program review is an integral part of planned educational change. As well as providing feedback about the impacts and effects of a particular program, program review has a feedforward function that contributes to program renewal. In other words, program review has an accountability component and a formative component that inform decision making. The accountability dimension of program review is concerned with questions such as "What happened as a result of the program?" and "Has the program achieved what was expected?" The formative part of program review suggests viable strategies for improving the effectiveness of the program; it provides fresh perspectives on how to revitalize a program.

Since the Ministry of Education provides program directives and has developed a schedule of selected provincial reviews, it is crucial that this Board carefully consider how its own program reviews can be linked to Ministry initiatives. Participating in program reviews conducted by the Ministry is one way to ensure that certain key areas get examined. Guideline areas not reviewed by the Ministry of Education must also be considered so as to ensure that a balanced perspective is provided.

Advance scheduling is a critical way to co-ordinate program review activities and to communicate to the system that program review is an important part of decision making. In order to realize its potential, program review must be a valued process and administration must play a critical role in deciding what gets reviewed.

Undertaking formal cyclical program reviews may not always be possible. In some instances, for example, the results of a program review may be required in a relatively short time frame. Consequently, a variety of conceptual approaches and methodologies is required. A long-range board plan should reflect system priorities, it should also indicate the intended size, type and level of each program review and the projected timeline.

In order to provide a focus for program review, a program review model is required that outlines the general steps that should be followed. For example, such a model should address the question of objectivity and at the same time ensure that action-oriented recommendations are embedded in the practical realities of schools and classrooms. At the outset, it is important to practically define a program into identifiable components so that it is amenable to review. Program review should also be closely linked to program development and implementation. When considering the implementation of curriculum guidelines, for example, program review should be an integral part of the board's **Document Implementation Plan.** Specific attention should also be given to ensuring that the underlying program theory is identified and that the conceptual basis of the program review complements the program being examined.

In provincial reviews, for example, it is likely that a focus on the intended curriculum, the implemented curriculum and the attained curriculum might be suitable. In general, program review procedures should be flexible enough to incorporate a number of conceptual approaches to program review as well as a variety of methods. Existing models such as those used by the International Educational Achievement (IEA) studies, the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM), the Ontario Ministry's Review, Development and Implementation (CRDI) model, the Co-operative Evaluation and Development of School Systems (CEDSS) model and current provincial program review procedures that involve the use of OAIP items and multiple matrix sampling techniques might be a source of ideas.

Where possible, complementary approaches that include quantitative and qualitative methods should be used. In addition, it is important to consider several issues such as support, flexible design, ongoing information sharing, adequate time for planning and analysis, confidentiality, reporting protocols and the need for follow-up activities.

Program review activities involve a variety of individuals and viewpoints. Consequently, every effort should be made to develop and maintain professional relationships. Staff who are involved in the review process should view the

experience as a positive and worthwhile one. The program review should be sensitive to professional and ethical concerns and emphasize co-operation and mutual respect. Participants should be treated as ends in themselves rather than solely as a means. Finally, where possible, staff development should be included as a planned part of the program review process.

In summary, there are five key reasons for having a program review model in the Simcoe County Board of Education:

1. To provide a strategy for obtaining accountability information about the impacts and outcomes of an education program;

2. To document a way to revitalize program development by providing formative information that leads to viable strategies for improving the effectiveness of an education program;

3. To facilitate the development of a long-range plan that would schedule and priorize system-wide program reviews and co-ordinate these activities with Ministry of Education initiatives;

4. To clarify the general procedures to be followed when conducting a program review within the Board.

5. To ensure that professional and ethical considerations are an integral part of all program reviews and that staff benefit from the process.

PROGRAM REVIEW MODEL

Ten steps collectively define this board's program review model (see Figure 1). It is intended that all program reviews follow each step sequentially in the review process.

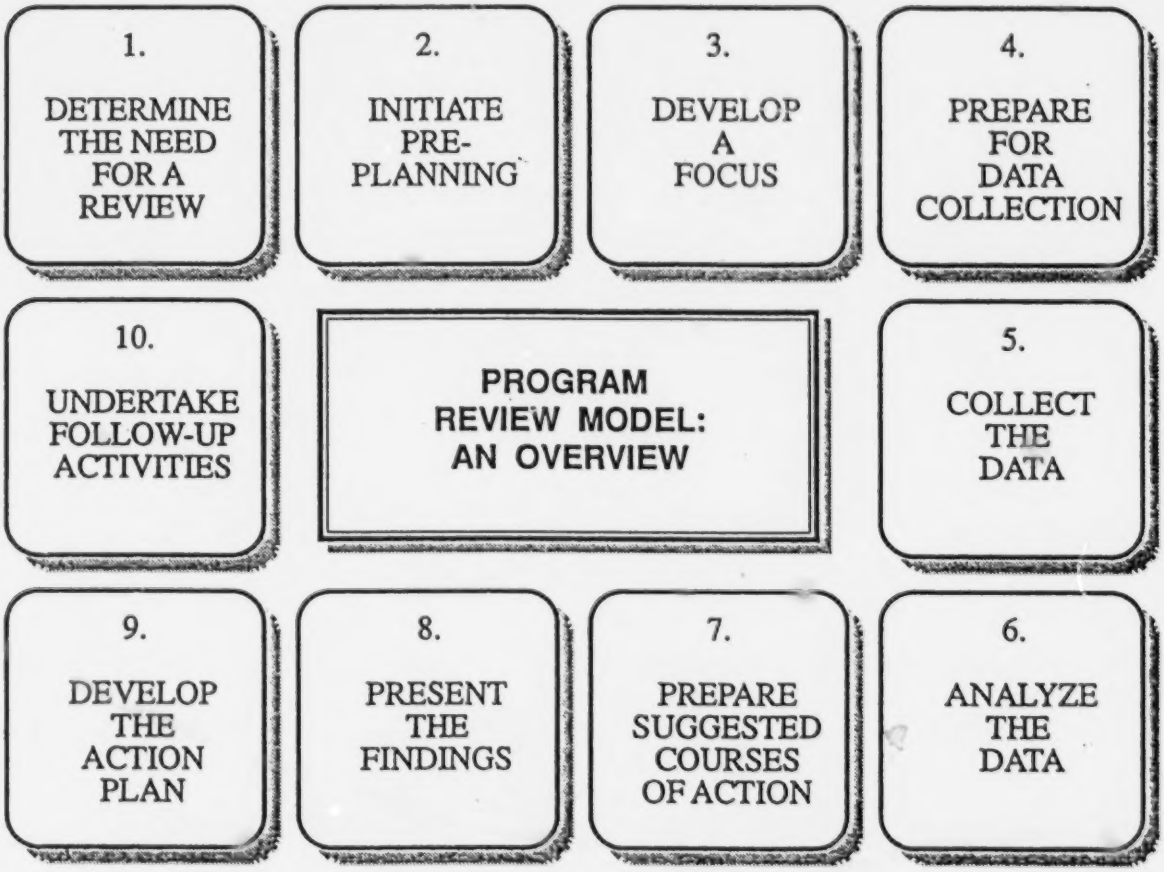
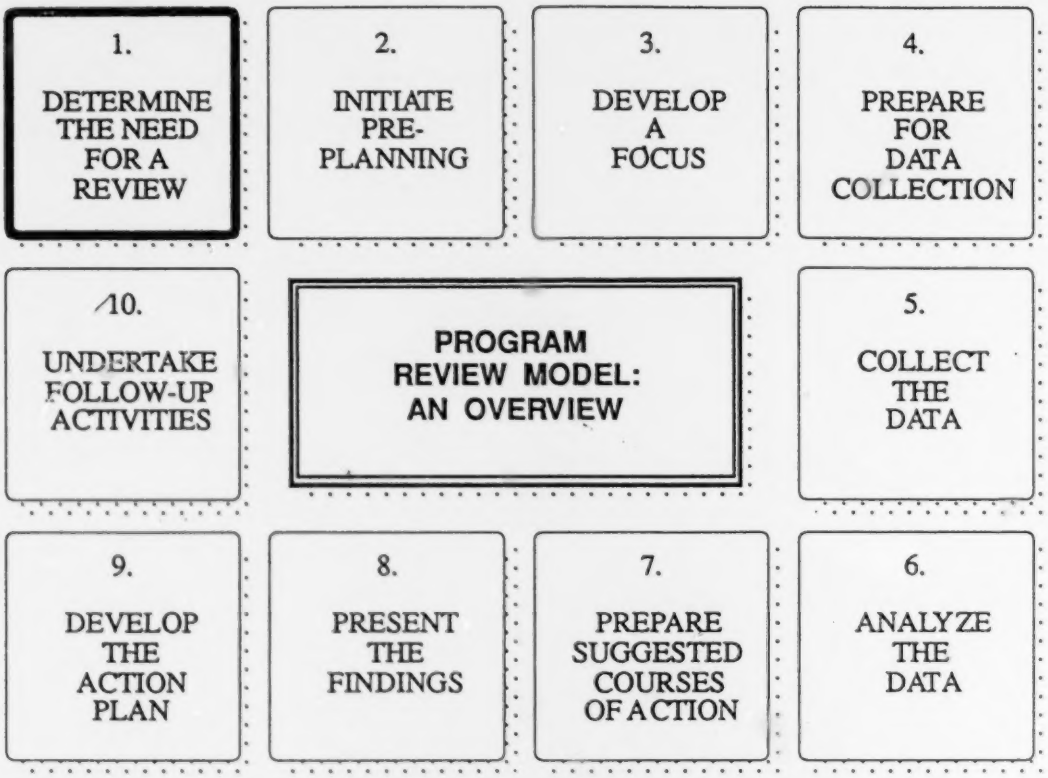


Figure 1: Program Review Model

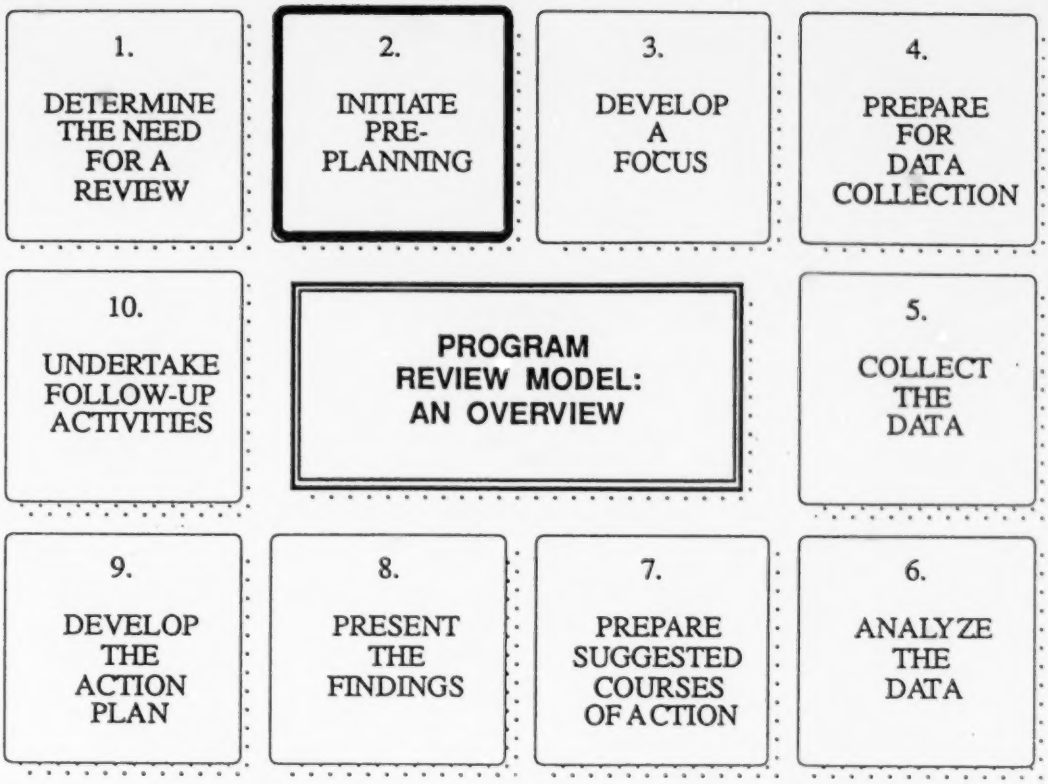
For each of the ten steps a number of specific procedures are also documented. These are presented in logical sequence and are intended as a set of exemplars to guide practice. For a variety of reasons, however, it may be necessary to omit one or more steps. If this occurs, it should be a planned action and a clear rationale should be documented. The procedures for each step are presented in the next few pages.



DETERMINE THE NEED FOR A REVIEW

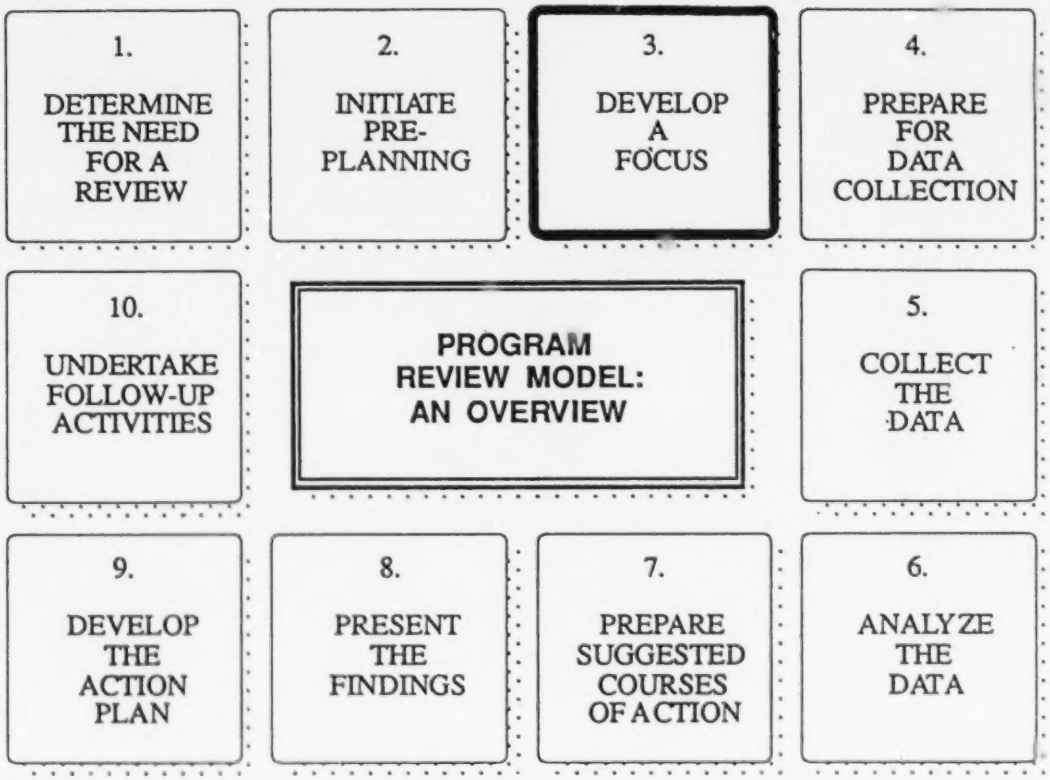
(This is initiated by the appropriate program manager in consultation with administrative council/executive council)

1. Identify why the program review is necessary.
2. Relate the program review to the level of program implementation and staff development needs.
3. State the purposes of the program review.
4. Determine the resources, including budget and staff, available to support the program review.
5. Consider the suitability of different types of program reviews and appropriate formats.



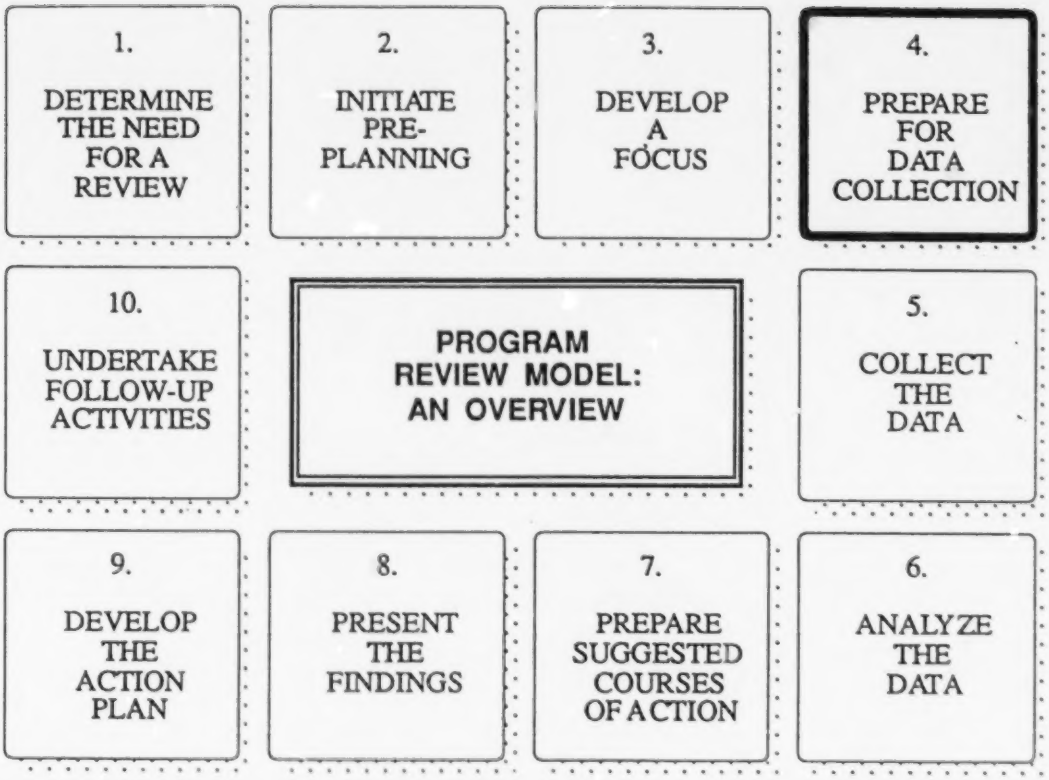
INITIATE PRE-PLANNING

6. Schedule the program review so that there is adequate advance planning time.
7. Contact and involve the Research Department.
8. Select the project manager for the program review.
9. Identify the clients and stakeholders for the program review.
10. Describe the program.
11. Find out as much as possible about the program and, where feasible, undertake an evaluability assessment so as to identify the program theory being used.
12. Set the boundaries of the program review and select an appropriate conceptual framework.



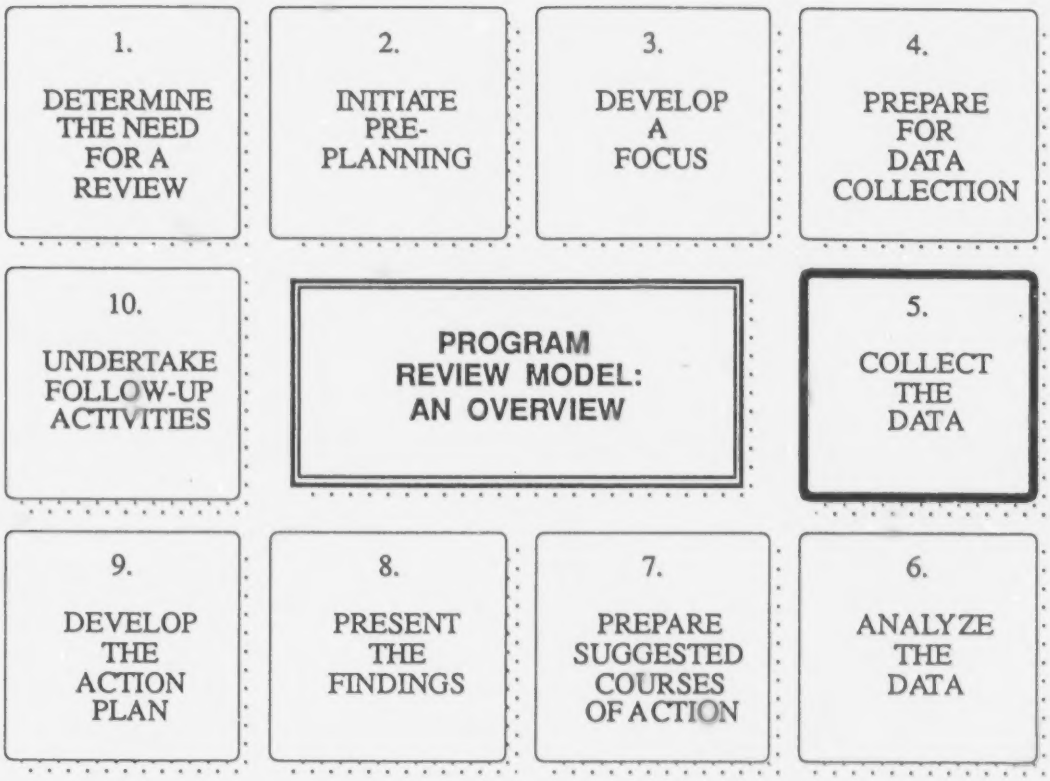
DEVELOP A FOCUS

13. Determine the expectations and review questions deemed important by the client and stakeholders.
14. Select the members of the program review team and provide an initial orientation.
15. Select one or more external consultants, where appropriate, and negotiate the parameters of their involvement.
16. Negotiate the expectations and review questions by involving members of the review team, client and stakeholders.
17. Clarify, and if necessary, modify the conceptual basis of the program review and ensure that it complements the identified program theory.
18. Consider the reporting strategies that could eventually be used and initiate procedures for ensuring that multi-media presentations are developed.
19. Prepare the proposal for the program review - this will be the blueprint for conducting the program review.
20. Present a summary of the final proposal to the system.



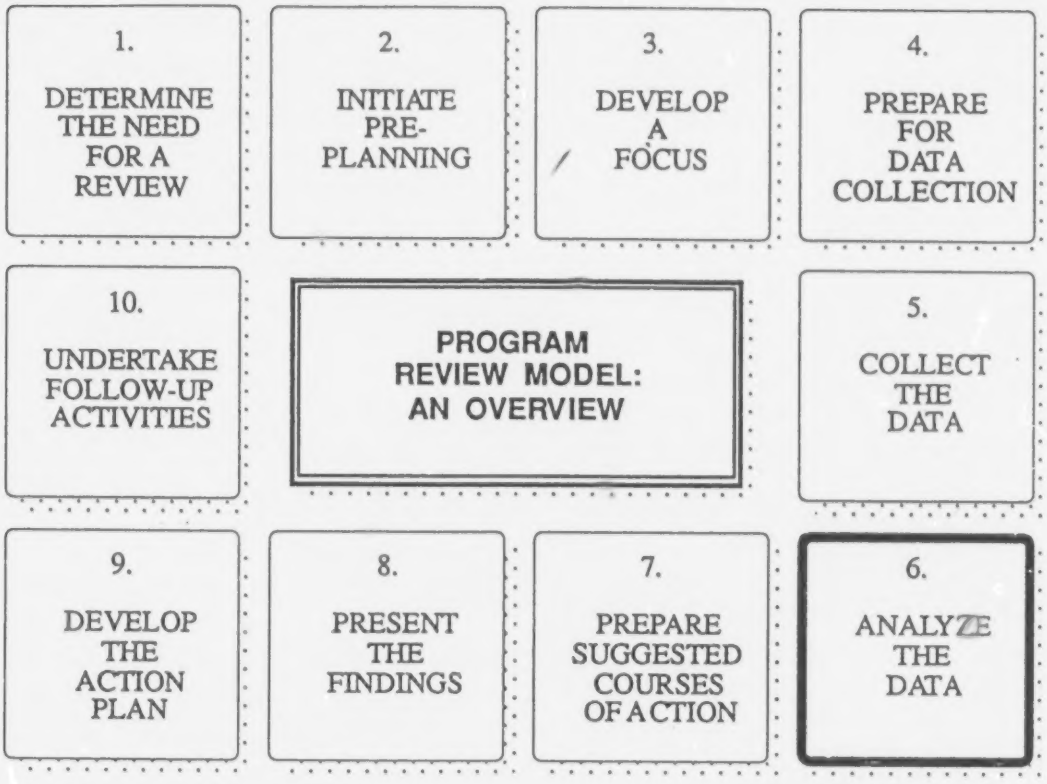
PREPARE FOR DATA COLLECTION

21. Determine what data will be collected.
22. Decide from whom the data will be collected.
23. Develop detailed procedures and strategies for collecting the data (include a sampling plan, consider complementary methods and decide how data will be analyzed).
24. Obtain and/or develop any necessary data collection procedures and instruments.
25. Consult with and/or involve key individuals, both from within the Board and outside the Board, in the development of data collection procedures and instruments.
26. Pilot, where appropriate, data collection instruments.
27. Ensure that the canons of established research are considered and followed where appropriate.
28. Undertaken in-service training where necessary.
29. Present a summary of the data collection procedures, methods and the proposed timelines to the system.



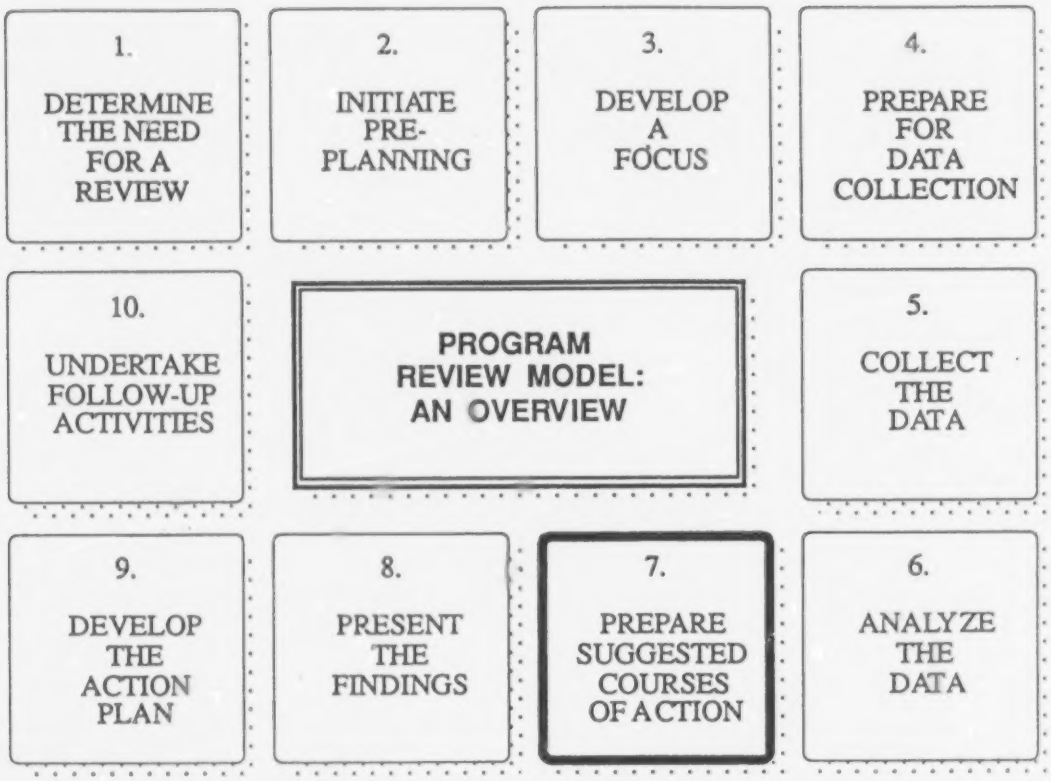
COLLECT THE DATA

30. Initiate data collection procedures - ensure that sufficient time has been allotted for administration, data collection and return, including, if necessary, appropriate follow-up.
31. Ensure that all communication, instructions and materials are relevant and clearly prepared.
32. Ensure that ethical standards are followed, e.g., board policy #4123 on confidentiality.



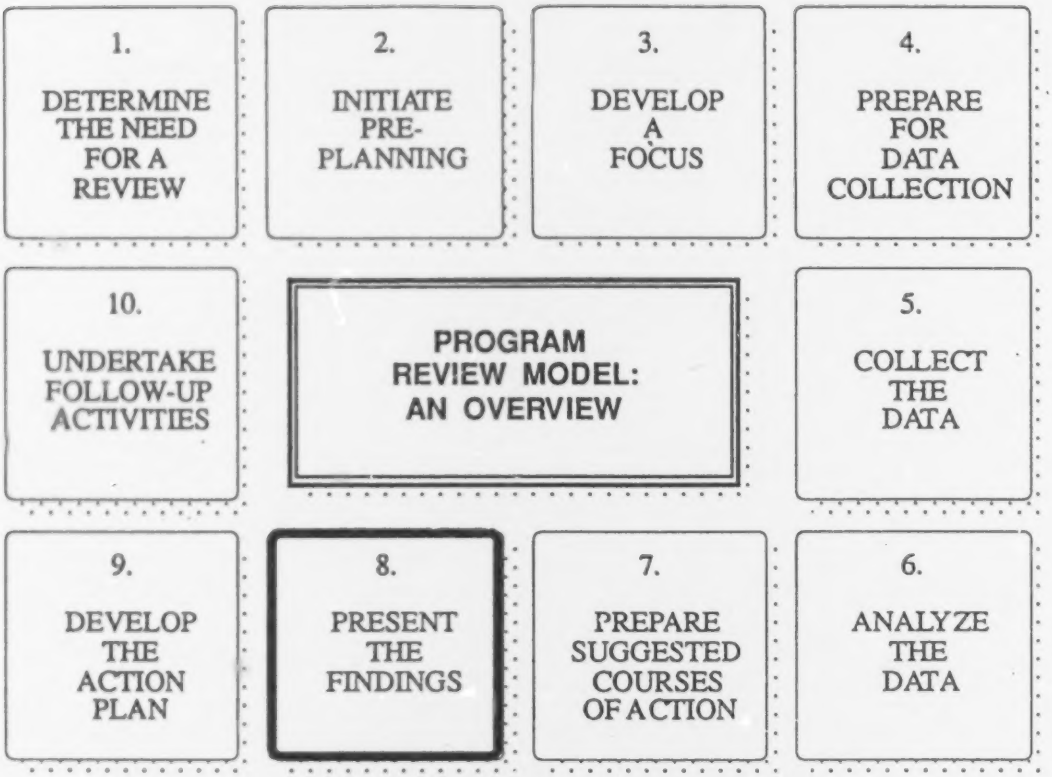
ANALYZE THE DATA

33. Prepare data for computer analysis where appropriate.
34. Prepare data for qualitative analysis where appropriate.
35. Analyze the data promptly.
36. Undertake preliminary discussions of the program review results.
37. Complete additional data analyses and prepare summaries of the results.
38. Prepare a clear and useable report of the program review results.



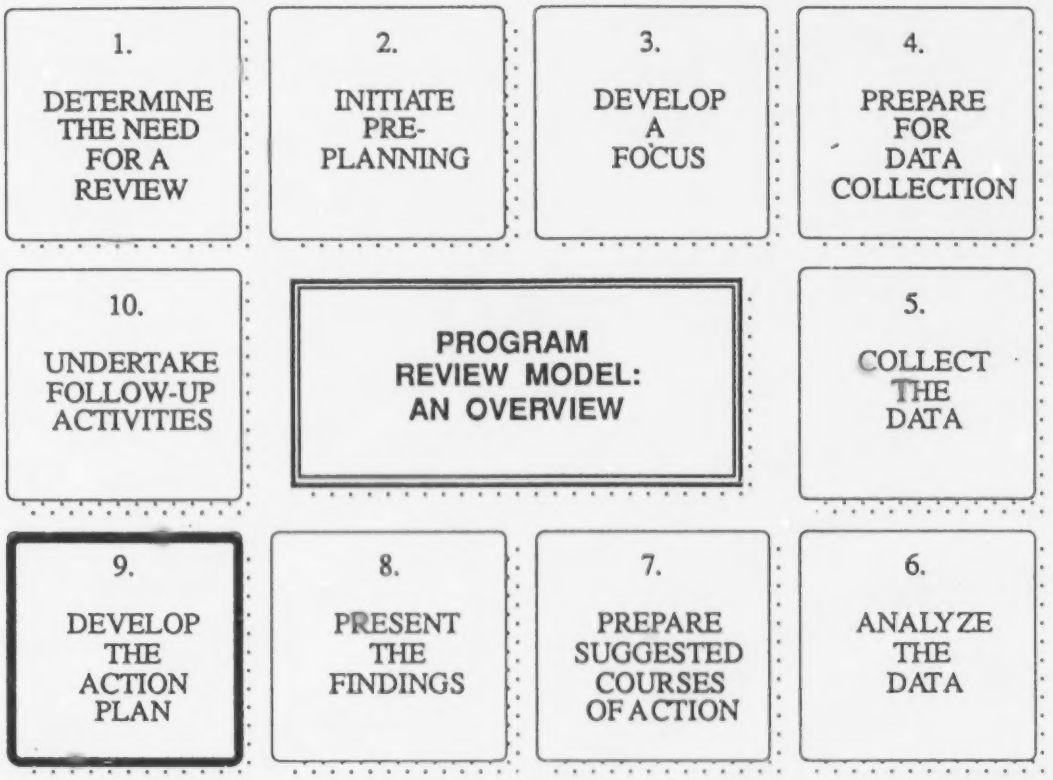
PREPARE SUGGESTED COURSES OF ACTION

39. Select an interpretation panel.
40. Become familiar with the results of the program review.
41. Determine acceptable and desirable levels and relate these to the actual results obtained.
42. Consider, where appropriate, comparisons of the program review results with other similar results such as those from provincial reviews.
43. Prepare a list of suggested courses of action.



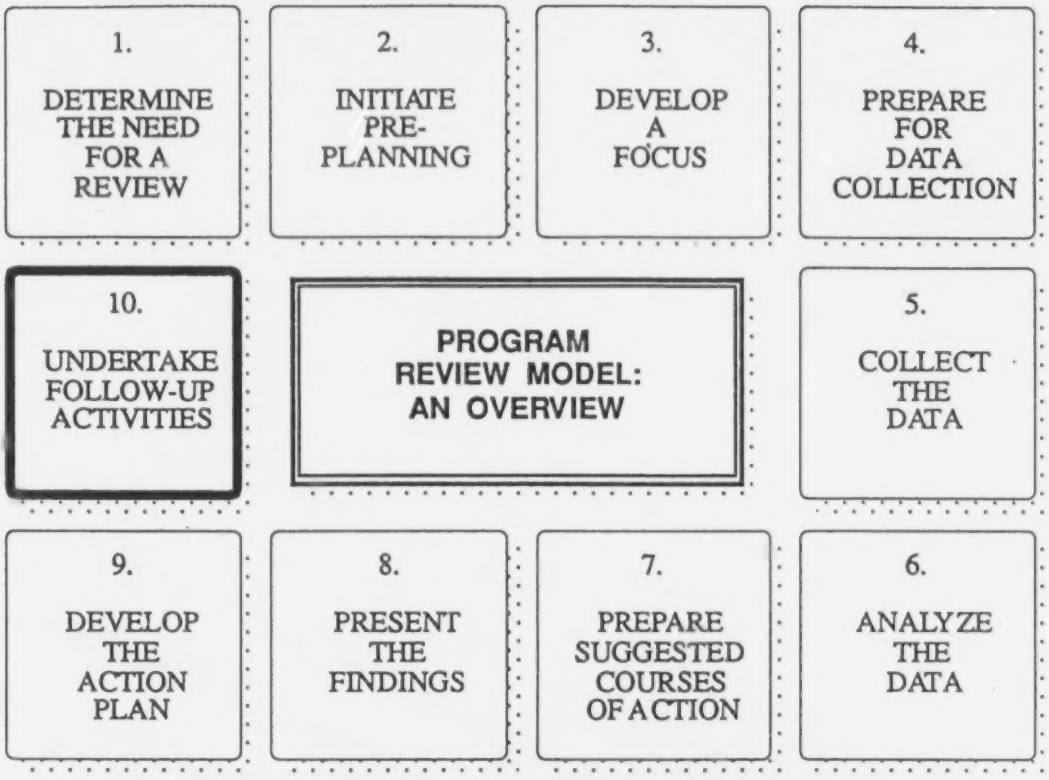
PRESENT THE FINDINGS

44. Involve the client in a discussion of the results and suggested courses of action.
45. Prepare the final report of the program review, including an executive summary and the suggested courses of action.
46. Ensure that audio-visual materials and other resources are ready to support subsequent presentations of the program review findings.
47. Present the final report of the program review to the client.
48. Establish a protocol and timeline for the presentation of the program review findings to the stakeholders and other interested individuals.



DEVELOP THE ACTION PLAN

49. Provide support to the client and program liaison, as required, so that steps are taken to prepare an action plan.
50. Ensure that the action plan clearly indicates who is responsible for implementing each specific action, including the timeline for implementation.



UNDERTAKE FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

51. Present the findings of the program review and the action plan to the various stakeholders and interest groups within the system.
52. Clear the program review report for public release.
53. Present the findings of the program review and the action plan to the various interest groups outside of the system where appropriate.
54. Ensure that a copy of the program review report and the action plan is sent to the board's research library and to computer-based retrieval centres such as ONTERIS and ERIC.
55. Disband the program review team as a formally constituted group.
56. Monitor the implementation of the action plan.
57. Involve, where appropriate, former members of the program review team in orientation and in-service sessions for other persons undertaking a program review.
58. Check the impact and consequences of the program review and the action plan one year and two years later.
59. Modify the board's program review model as required.

STRATEGIES

There is a number of strategies that facilitate program review activities in a large school board with limited resources. A few of these are briefly highlighted below.

Make Program Review An Integral Part of the Implementation Process:
When program review is an established part of the board's implementation process there is likely to be increased acceptance of and commitment to review activities by those involved in implementation activities. Program review will be perceived as one part of the implementation cycle. The feedforward and feedback functions of program review will be viewed as necessary to further refinement and modification of the program being implemented. On a more practical level, the results of the program review can be used to make informed decisions about budget designated for further implementation activities.

Make Program Review "A Window Of Opportunity":
It is difficult to decide what criteria should be used to parsimoniously share limited resources. When the system supports a program review initiative, however, there is a tacit, if not an overt, commitment to consider and act upon the findings of the review. Making sure that there is a critical path to decision-makers before the program review commences is essential. Furthermore, ensuring that all staff associated with the program are aware of this "window of opportunity" can only heighten commitment and motivation toward the review.

Model Successful Small Scale Monitoring/Research Projects:
Small scale monitoring/research projects can serve to re-energize program implementation activities. In addition, such projects can demonstrate the value of an enquiry-based activity by showing how the findings can be used to inform decisions about the program.

Encourage School-Based And Classroom Action Research:

School-based and classroom action research also demonstrate the value of an enquiry-based activity. More importantly, however, such research tends to further engage teachers and help them become critically reflective practitioners. These staff are not only likely to support program review activities, but they are also likely to form a cadre of willing volunteers.

Design a Manageable Program Review

It is easy to get caught up in the "excitement of the chase". Nevertheless, every effort should be made to plan a program review that is manageable and affordable. Answers to questions like the following ones can assist in determining the appropriate size and design of a program review:

* Why is the program review necessary?
* How much money is available?
* What additional resources are accessible?
* When are the findings of the program review needed? How much time is available to complete the progrm review?
* Should the program review focus on a wide range of components or will a few key areas be sufficient?
* Can the conceptual framework for the program review be modified so as to support a more stremlined and manageable effort?
* How large and representative does the review team need to be? Can an external consultant undertake all or part of the program review?
* Is it necessary to involve total populations or can sampling procedures be used?
* Can complementary research methods be selected so that they contribute to the efficient and economical collection of data?

As well as answering questions like these, it might be useful for the system to have a strategy for designating the type of program review that it is prepared to support. For example, the three criteria of time, money and depth of review, as illustrated in Figure 1 below, could be used to provide some direction for those planning a program review.

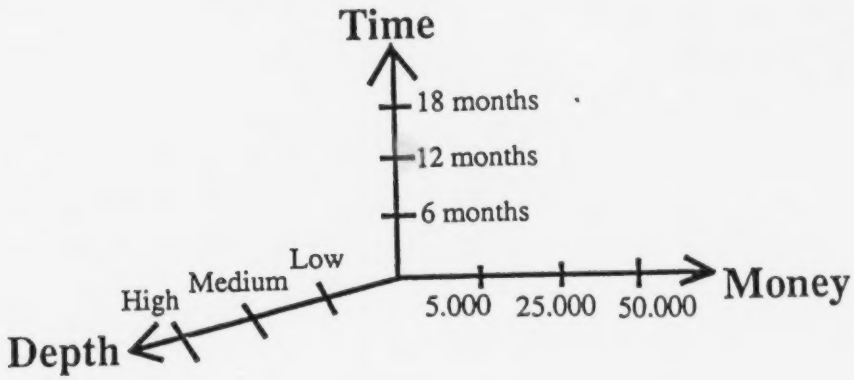


Figure 1: Program Review Criteria

Be Credible, Useful And Timely:

Little clarification is required. Program reviews must deal with meaningful questions and generate data that can assist individuals make informed decisions about that program. In addition, the data must be systematically gathered in a manner that follows the canons of social science research. And, the findings and suggested courses of action should be available within an acceptable time schedule. If program review is viewed as a valuable enterprise that is, indeed, a helpful, rather than an esoteric activity, then it will be supported.

Engage Staff In All Phases Of The Program Review:

A few strategies for engaging staff have already been suggested. Another area for enhancing staff involvement is during the negotiation of the review questions and the writing of the proposal. Participation at this phase can only serve to enhance ownership of the review. The involvement of staff in the interpretation of the findings is another critical juncture that actively encourages staff commitment to the review process.

Use Complementary Research Approaches:

The use of complementary research approaches seeks elaboration, enhancement, illustration and clarification of the results. The intent is to make the data meaningful and to assist in the interpretation of the data.

Use Alternative Assessment Strategies

While expediency might initially suggest the use of pen and paper testing, careful consideration should be given to the use of alternative assessment strategies. The use of portfolios and context-specific performance measures, for example, should be seen as valid ways of portraying student outcomes that are linked to meaningful instructional tasks. By using alternative assessments that are related directly to the program, then the program review will yield relevant and useful accountability information about the impacts and outcomes of the program.

Plan For And Include Deliberate Staff Development Activities:

Staff development is an integral part of the change process. By ensuring that staff development activities are built into the review process, staff are able to examine program initiatives and reflect on their role in the implementation process. Furthermore, some of the mystique associated with program review is diminished and an increased commitment to use the findings of the review to further drive implementation is likely to occur. Program review initiatives that include quality staff development opportunities are also likely to receive the support of staff and senior administration.

PROGRAM REVIEW IN CLASSROOMS AND SCHOOLS

Although the purpose of this document is to describe a program review model that can be used at the **system level**, there are numerous ways that the strategies and program review procedures outlined in this document can also be used at the **classroom and school level**. The purpose of this section is to highlight a few issues for further consideration by teachers and school administrators.

If program review is to occur at the classroom and school level, then it should be included in **long range plans** and should appear in that part of the school's **mission statement** dealing with curriculum implementation and renewal. In addition, program implementation and review activities must be reflected in the role descriptions of staff and be part of the **supervision** process.

Review activities should be **planned collaborative endeavours** that encompass **comprehensive strategies**. If this is to occur then the principal must establish a **school culture** that promotes staff awareness and involvement. All staff, for example, should be aware of the **board's implementation plan** and strategies associated with the **change process**. It is imperative that the school climate foster and support educational enquiry. For example, prior to a system and school-based review all staff should be encouraged to **conduct small-scale classroom and school level monitoring, action research and review projects**, including wherever possible assessment of student achievement. Regular discussions are required to assist staff make meaning from their experiences.

It is often helpful to identify **key individuals** who can assume responsibility for co-ordinating review activities at the school level. Such persons should be involved in regular staff development activities related to issues associated with implementation and review. To facilitate classroom and school level review activities, it is also helpful to develop and circulate a few relevant resources, such as a **school-based review manual**, to staff. In order to enhance communication and focus activities principals are encouraged to consider the possibility of **designating the system's program review year as the year for school-based review activities**.

When the system undertakes a program review, schools should be encouraged to make the review a meaningful experience for classroom and school activities. Schools should consider augmenting the system review by doing some or all of the following:

* All teachers should have a concise written statement describing **what the program would look like** if it were fully implemented. How, for example, would an observer know that the required methodology was being used or the students were learning what was intended?

* Where (matrix) sampling is used to gather information from students, schools should **collect information from all students** so as to have classroom and school data that can then be used for local assessments of student achievement,

curriculum decisions and eventual comparison with the system's results.

* When only a few teachers are asked to provide information, then the school should carefully consider how best to use this information, including the possibility of collecting similar information from other staff for school-based decision making.

* In order to make the school-based review process more relevant and practical, it may be necessary for the school to **complement the system review** by collecting additional information.

* **Regular staff discussions** should be scheduled so that staff have opportunities to discuss the program being reviewed and share reactions to and concerns about the review process.

* **Principals and key persons** who are coordinating review activities in the school should **consult with staff on a regular basis**, including in-class visits.

A critical part of the review process is the **interpretation** of results. Schools should have a procedure in place to ensure that school review results are carefully considered. This process should include the establishment of acceptable standards as well as the comparison of the school's results with other findings such as those of the Board or province. In addition to providing feedback about the program, the review also provides information that can be used to facilitate program renewal. Consequently, it is imperative that the resulting **action plan** be implemented and included in a revised **long range plan**. Action should be seen to occur and the review should inform subsequent planning and implementation activities.

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